



U.S. Department of Justice  
United States Attorney  
District of Kansas

## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### SISTERS PLEAD GUILTY IN PASSPORT FRAUD CASE

WICHITA, KAN. – Two sisters who admitted using counterfeit Texas birth certificates to obtain U.S. passports have been convicted of making a false passport application, United States Attorney for Kansas Eric Melgren announced today.

The sisters, **Beatriz Estrella**, 30, and **Selene Estrella**, 29, who both lived in Dodge City and were employed by the Dodge City school district, pleaded guilty late Wednesday before Senior U.S. District Judge Wesley E. Brown, who sentenced both to time served in jail on the condition that they immediately be deported from the United States.

Melgren said both women were turned over today to the custody of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and both agreed in their plea agreements not to contest deportation. They will be removed to Mexico within about two weeks, he said.

A third defendant charged in the case, **Estela Valverde**, 31, a U.S. citizen who has worked in the Dodge City Social Security Administration (SSA) field office since 1998, is scheduled for jury trial March 15. Valverde is accused of manipulating Social Security

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records to reflect that the Estrella sisters were U.S. citizens and with making false statements to special agents of the SSA Office of Inspector General. Beatriz Estrella is Valverde's sister-in-law.

Melgren said the sisters, and Valverde, were arrested by federal agents Jan. 12 in Dodge City. Both passports and the counterfeit birth certificates used to obtain them have been recovered. The Estrellas may not return to the United States without the consent of the Secretary of Homeland Security and cannot even apply for re-admission for at least five years, Melgren said.

The case was investigated by the Office of Inspector General of the SSA and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brent Anderson.

As in any criminal case, persons charged with a crime are considered innocent until they either plead guilty or are proven guilty. The charges filed merely alleged criminal conduct.